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MANUAL TRAINING AND MANUAL LABOR.

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THE march of manual training in the educational world is rivaled by the retreat of manual labor in the industrial world. At first glance the general situation seems to be something of an anomaly. The tremendous development of machinery and applied science in the industrial world has crowded in between the brain and the hand, feeding on both, assimilating both into the complex automatism of its own growing structure, till the hand-labor that is left, to say nothing of the brain-labor, seems hardly more than a temporary makeshift, awaiting a few more new inventions to put it, not painlessly perhaps, out of the way. And now comes the exploitation in the schools of the very form of activity which is fast becoming obsolete in industrial life; and with this exploitation of a survival there arises, curiously enough, or rather just as we should have expected, in analogy with many other social survivals, an entirely new attitude toward hand-work. It comes to have an æsthetic value it did not enjoy before. The original activity became drudgery or worse. The survival is a thing of beauty.

An anomaly, or a paradox, is of value because it forces conceptions to a deeper level. Is there a tendency to confuse manual training with manual labor—with the handling of tools and materials to secure merely tangible results? Is the child to work with his hands, and with the knife, saw, and hammer, after the manner of an adult laborer or unskilled artisan, in response to the dictates of a model, or sequence of models? Is it argued that the child's moral nature, his habit of truthfulness, is being developed by this process, because of the fact, forsooth, that he cannot very well lie out of any discrepancy between the model and his own copy? If so, then the present era in manual training corresponds, all too closely, to the great era of "fancy-work," with all its unfanciful hideousness and triviality; an era which

followed the rapid development of machinery for spinning and weaving, culminating in the invention of the sewing-machine, and which in its unhappy fashion exemplified the law of the æsthetic survival of a formerly useful occupation.

I have seen some outputs of manual training which educationally were, so far as I could make out, pretty much on a par with the crocheting of tidies, with "drawn-work," or with the embroidery of doilies and lambrequins. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the educational value of such modes of expression. For some individuals it is doubtless very great. Nor would I confuse the placing of a little stitch at regular intervals along the line of a shop-stamped pattern with true constructive and artistic work in textiles. The point I wish to make is, after all, the point that has been made so many times that one is in doubt as to how much longer it will be proper to bring it up; namely, that the educational value of any form of activity depends, not on the stuff used, but on the attitude of the user. Do manual training and "fancy-work" amount to the same thing educationally? They do, I repeat, if the attitude of the worker in each is practically the same. And I submit that it is practically the same when the worker in wood or in iron, as the worker in worsted, in silk, or in linen, follows, though patiently, the line of a stamped pattern whatever it be called.

Thus we come back to our anomaly, in so far as educationally we find ourselves repeating, under the guise of manual training a form of activity which the larger social and industrial situation is trying to eliminate and tolerates only as a temporary makeshift.

So far we have been looking only at one side of the æsthetic value which a social survival may have. We have been discussing, by implication at least, the more narrow, trivial, and anomalous directions into which the æsthetic interest may lead. Everyone has probably experienced the kind of æsthetic gratification one has in doing over again, under very different conditions, something that was originally distasteful, or in living over again in the imagination something that in the first place was a hardship. One's dire failure can sometimes be recounted with

great satisfaction in the presence of later successes. This may be the lowest form of æsthetic gratification, being pretty much a sheer repetition of a previous experience. There is little appearance of growth in the repetition, in the recount. The prosperous individual who is forever sunning himself in the reminiscences of his early toil and struggle is a type that leans toward the side of complacency rather than toward the side of further development of the spirit. Still there is more of positive value in this form of æsthetic gratification than we have charged to its credit. On the very face of it, it is something more than a reinstatement of a previous experience. The event has been taken out of its original setting and placed in a new one. Hence, the charm it did not have before.

And here we come to a parting of the ways. In one direction lies the blind alley of mere repetition of the act for the sake of continually realizing upon its charm. In the other direction lies the open road of further question and endeavor, of larger possibilities, toward which the æsthetic appreciation may be an impelling stimulus. Surely the quickened interest in arts and crafts, the newer æsthetic appreciation of things that are "hand-made" may have more in it than that form of æsthetic gratification which arises through the mere repetition of manual labor in the new setting of machine-made things. If it has not, then it deserves to stand condemned as a "fad" and a "frill."

It is a matter of comparative indifference as to whether the arbiters of taste will continue to fill their houses with "hand-made" furniture, "hand-made" books, and "hand-made" bric-a-brac. It is a matter radically different as to whether this new-found appreciation of manual work which has come into education, this new æsthetic attitude which is upon the whole the most revolutionary factor in modern education, shall be allowed to crystallize into a sentimental form of manual labor, or whether it shall be generalized into a group of constructive activities which shall constitute a fundamental part of the curriculum. It is not a question of determining the place of constructive activities. It is a question of how far at any given time these

activities are *recognized* and *utilized* as educational means and opportunities.

In the industrial world what would probably be regarded as the two most serious factors in the "labor problem" are the isolation of labor, particularly of unskilled labor, on the one side, and the irresponsibility of intellectual control, on the other. Specialists in nerve diseases tell us that one of the most characteristic symptoms of that form of mental derangement known as hysteria is some phase of anæsthesia, or the lack of feeling, the lack of sensitiveness, in some part of one or more of the sense-organs, usually touch and vision. One writer¹ significantly terms this anæsthesia of hysteria "chronic absent-mindedness," or a "contraction of the field of consciousness." There is evidence for believing that this partial loss of feeling, of sensitiveness, is due, not to the impairment or actual destruction of any portion of the sense-organ itself, but to the isolation, the dissociation, of the inner nerve connections. The point may be given an application in terms of social psychology. If there be any violence and working at cross-purposes in the present industrial world which can be fitly compared to the violence—the "accidents," as they are sometimes called—of a hysterical patient, the analogy would lead one to look for corresponding symptoms of social anæsthesia, of lack of feeling, lack of sensitiveness, equivalent to "chronic absent-mindedness," to a "contraction of the field of consciousness," on the part of those concerned, employer and employed. And it would lead one to see in these symptoms, when found, in this lack of "touch" and "vision," not the impairment or actual destruction of any portion of the sense-organs of social consciousness, but the isolation, the dissociation, of inner nerve connections; for example, in the failure of manual work to be done in terms of free intelligence, as an expression of personality, and in the co-ordinate stultification of intellectual control in its own irresponsible exercise.

Is the manual training situation to be chiefly a reflection of a pathological and hysterical social condition? Is it to be an

¹PIERRE JANET, *The Mental State of Hystericals*; translated by CAROLINE R. CORSON.

æsthetic survival of the gulf between manual labor and the operations of intelligence? Sufficiently current, probably, is the belief that the utilization of motor activity in getting things made is likely, in the case of children and youth, to be of educational value. But why should it be of educational value in the case of children and youth any more than in the case of adults, unless it be the occasion of bringing into play, also, the ideas, the intelligence, the "inner nerve connections," the "touch," and the "vision" of the individual worker? It is surely the freeing of these that transforms manual labor into manual training.